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NEGATIVE BURN

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Cover Art by Greg DiGenti

Desperado Studios
P.O. Box 893
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30101

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Staff Letterer
Roxanne Starr

Production Manager
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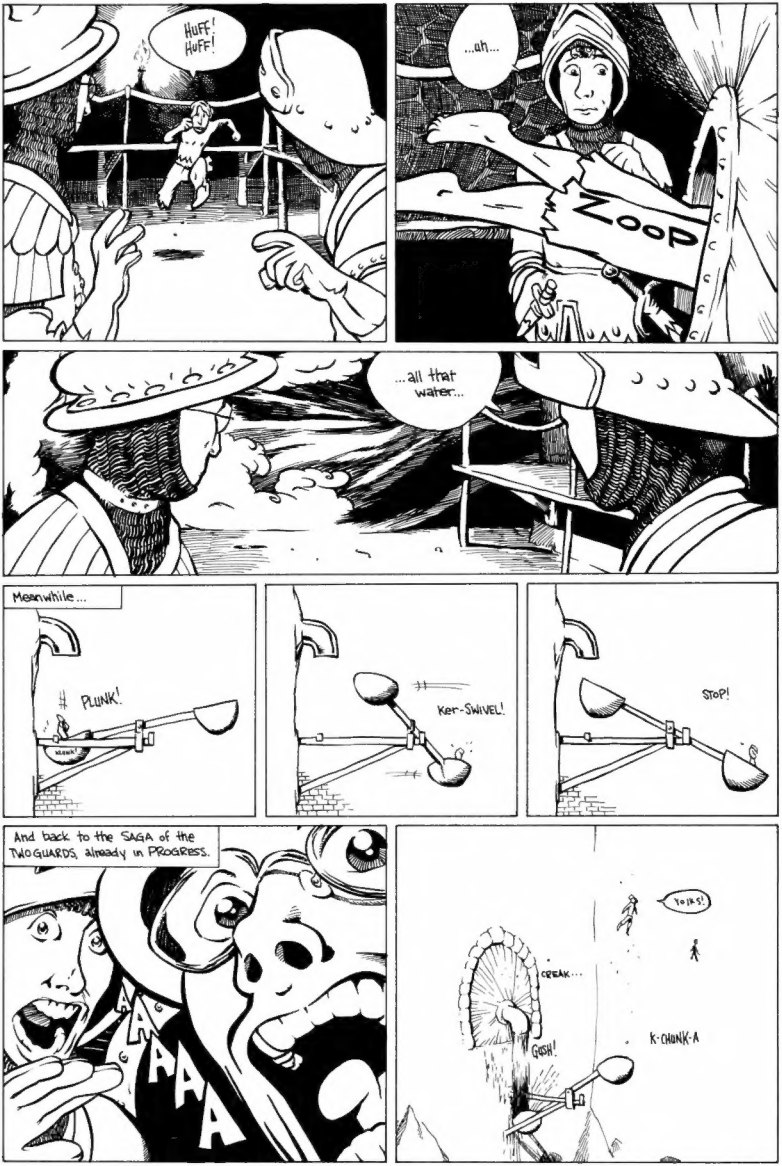
REPLACEMENT GOD
Knute's
#187
E·S·C·A·P·E·S
by Zander Cannon
Well, you can tell SPRING's here finally.
The HÜRBAN GEESE are heading NORTH again... I mean WAGONLOADS of them.
So to SPEAK.
Well, EXACTLY. You shouldn't need a WAGON to cart GEESE around — Good THING, too... These geese are HUGE.
I think you can just say "FLOCKS."
Sure, flocks, but then people WONDER if you mean "FLOCKS" as in just a bunch a GEESE, or "FLOCKS" as in a WAGONLOAD of geese.

Knute's Escapes are the preamble to *The Replacement God*, by Zander Cannon, published by Amaze Ink / Slave Labor.

I mean, flocks of ANYTHING ELSE, sure. Like, "FLOCKS of people went to the BEAR-BAITING to ... uh... torture a BEAR."
"And then FLOCKS of REVENGE-MINDED BEARS came back and ATE THEIR FILL of the PEOPLE flocks."
or WHATEVER.
But a flock of GEESE, that could be, like, THREE GEESE.
And you're not TALKING about three geese.
NO, MY FRIEND!! I AM TALKING ABOUT WAGONLOADS!!
Your metaphors ASTOUND me.
And well they MIGHT.
SAY, I have a QUESTION.
WHY do we always get the CATACOMBS on GUARD DUTY?
Are we not GOOD GUARDS?
MAYBE they figure too much FRESH AIR makes us INSOLENT and INSUBORDINATE.
Whereas HERE...
UKH... Stale, diseased air... weakening...
...feeling... OBEDIENT...
Shine your BOOTS? Sure, no PROBLEM. With my TONGUE? Why would I mind?
UH...
SAY, THAT'S different.
What's that?
UCH! Poo! PT!
Check it OUT. The CANAL'S blocked.

Wow... It's some sort of FUNNEL into that PIPE.
Hmm.
SPLISH!
And isn't there supposed to be more WATER in here? Pouring out over the CLIFF?
HERE, lower me DOWN so I can see what's THROUGH here.
Whoa, MAN. SOMEONE'S been BUSY.
What is it?
There's this CATAPULT CONTRAPTION down here. And it's BUILT on some sort of SWIVEL JOINT. It's sticking out from the CLIFF so that the NEAREST BUCKET is right below me.
Out just beyond the SWIVEL JOINT is a BLOCK that stops the arms from SPINNING when the AWAY arm is in the DOWN position.
To START the thing swinging there's a WEDGE or some sort BELOW and to the RIGHT of the NEAR BUCKET.
Okay, PULL me UP, I'm gonna get a BLOODY NOSE.
Now, I wanna know what happened to all that...
EXCUSE ME PLEASE!!


HUFF! HUFF!
...ah...
ZOOP
...all that water...
Meanwhile...
PLUNK!
Ker-SWIVEL!
STOP!
And back to the SAGA of the TWO GUARDS, already in PROGRESS.
AAAA
YOIKS!
CREAK...
GOSH!
K-CHUNK-A

No! Wait! Get off me!
EXCUSE me, GOOSE — Just...
HONK!
...need a SHORT RIDE over...
HONK
...thanks.
HONK!
HA HA! ONWARD to FREEDOM, GOOSE!
ERK
GULP
MANY JOKES.
AND Meanwhile...
Hmm..
Any ONE of those will be FINE.
Right AWAY, Sire.

For *Knute's Escapes* submission information, send a S.A.S.E. to Zander Cannon @ 2011 Pleasant Ave. S. #5, Mpls, MN, 55404
It's coming soon!

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by Harvey award nominee Zander Cannon

the Replacement God

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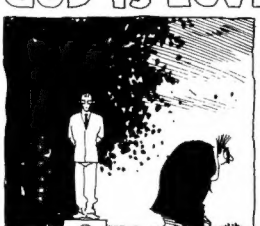
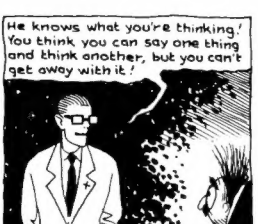
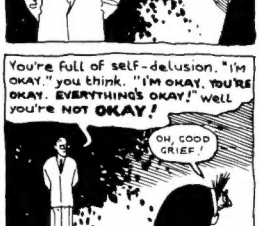
MR. MAMOULIAN

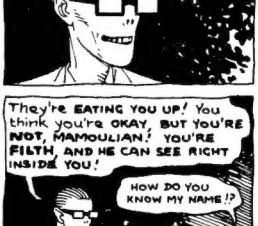
GOD IS LOVE





He's got you in His sights! He could take you in His hand and crush you like a doll! He could just do that, and you don't realise it! You're full of lies and conceit!




They're EATING YOU UP! You think you're OKAY, BUT YOU'RE NOT, MAMOULIAN! YOU'RE FILTH, AND HE CAN SEE RIGHT INSIDE YOU!
HOW DO YOU KNOW MY NAME!?

THE PATTERN IS FORMING, MAMOULIAN, LIKE A SPIDER'S WEB WITH YOU IN THE MIDDLE! THE BIG STORY! YOU DON'T DESERVE IT, MAMOULIAN! I GET TO STAND ON THIS STUPID BOX, BUT YOU GET THE BIG PART!
AND WHY YOU!? BECAUSE HE LOVES YOU, MAMOULIAN!

EEEK!
IRON
EMPIRES

NO, DON'T BE SHCARE'T!
EEEK!
LITTLE COUNTESS!
I WON'T HURT YOU!
YAH, I CHENT'IL KERRN.
NO BITE.
KRUMP
COME ON DARE. GET AWAY FROM DA RIVER!

GVICK NOW.
WHOOM
THE SNAKE'S RIGHT. I'VE GOT NO CHOICE...
DAS RIGHT... EFF I VANTED TO KILT YOU, YOU VOULD BE DET ALREADY.
I'M NO GHANZA OLD KERRN JOU KNOW...
MY PAPA VAS KOZU-KERRN: DEVELOPED FAMOUS FIGHTING STYLE.
I'VE HEARD OF KERRNS OF COURSE, BUT I'VE NEVER MET A REAL ONE BEFORE.
I HEARD THEY WERE A STUPID RACE. THERE SEEMS TO BE SOMETHING MORE TO THIS ONE, THOUGH.
HALLO, LITTLE GIRL.

VAT'S YOU NAME DERE, LITTLE GIRL?
CHAK
WHUSHH

WHACK
RIP
GO ON LITTLE SCHPARROW... JOU IST FREE NOW...
LAHK'S BLOOD...
JOU SEE? I AM A GOOT KERRN. I NOT HURT YOU. COME VIT ME. VEE GO EAT SOMETHING TOGEDDUH.

OH... I LIFF HERE MANY YEARS NOW.
I USED TO BE A SOLCHUR TOO, JOU KNOW...
A SOLCHUR LIKE MY PAPA...
BUT, JOU KNOW, I ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A POET...
JOU TINK DAT'S FUNNY?

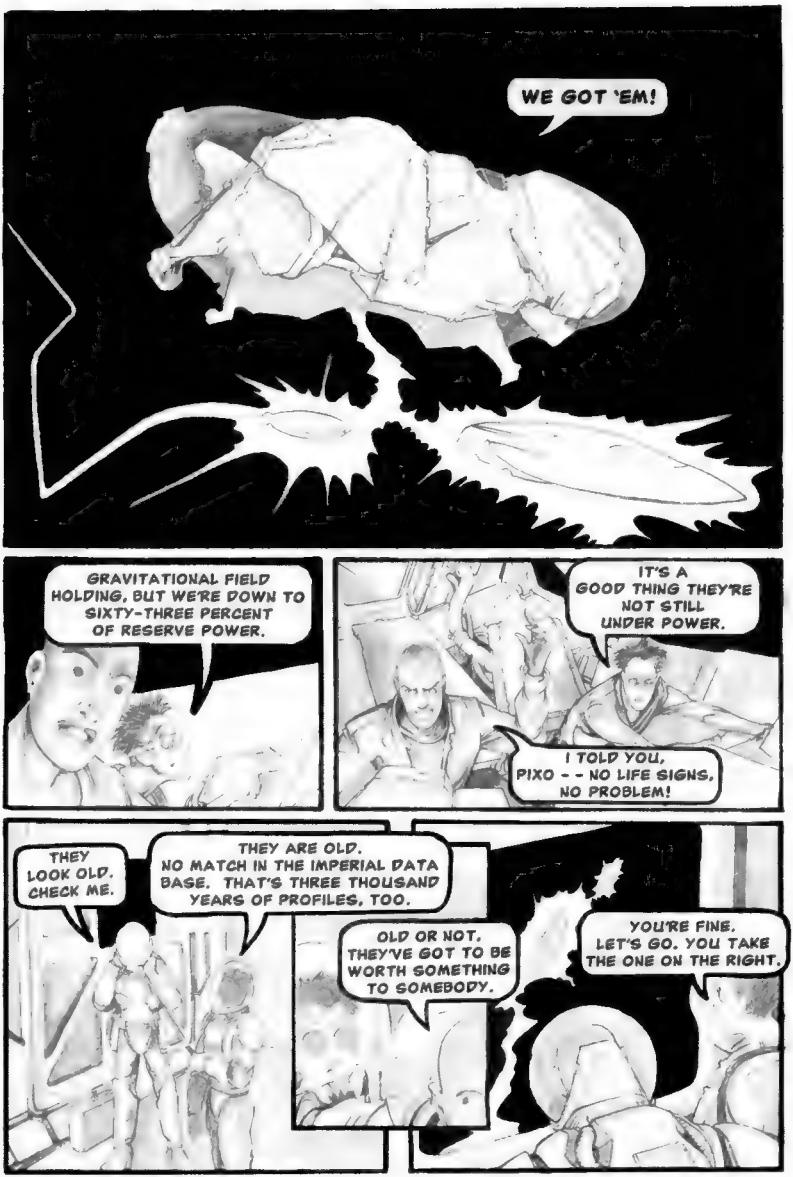
NOT AT ALL.
THERE'S SOMETHING ODD ABOUT THIS CREATURE. I ALMOST BELIEVE HE COULD WRITE POETRY.
VELL, MY COMRADES THOUGHT I WAS GONGAFAK! JOU KNOW? CRAZY!
DEY BEAT ME UNTIL I WAS ALMOST DED AND LEFT ME LYING IN A DITCH...
MY FUST POEM WAS ABOUT LYING IN DAT DITCH.
IT VAS VERY HOT AND DRY.
ZOE NOW I WRITE POETRY. AND EAT SQUIRRELS.
DIS SQUIRREL'S TIME TO COME TO MAKE US A TASTY MEAL. I KILT HIM VIT NO BAD WORDS. DERE IST NO DISGRACE IN BECOMING FOOT FOR UDDERS.

To Be Continued...in Negative Burn #37

TENSOR MATRIX
SALVAGE

written by Edward Martin III illustrated by Paul Mendoza

DEEP!
HEY, PIXO, CHECK IT OUT!
TWO SOURCES.... METALLIC COMPOSITION...
...NOT ENOUGH MASS FOR A METEOR...
...AND NO LIFE SIGNS! WHAT A SALVAGE!
BUT, NOBEN, THEY'RE MOVING JUST OVER SIXTY PERCENT OF LIGHT SPEED...
SO IT'S FAST MONEY. WHO CARES? WE'LL FIGURE SOMETHING OUT. TRUST ME!


WE GOT 'EM!
GRAVITATIONAL FIELD HOLDING, BUT WE'RE DOWN TO SIXTY-THREE PERCENT OF RESERVE POWER.
IT'S A GOOD THING THEY'RE NOT STILL UNDER POWER.
I TOLD YOU, PIXO - - NO LIFE SIGNS, NO PROBLEM!
THEY LOOK OLD. CHECK ME.
THEY ARE OLD. NO MATCH IN THE IMPERIAL DATA BASE. THAT'S THREE THOUSAND YEARS OF PROFILES, TOO.
OLD OR NOT, THEY'VE GOT TO BE WORTH SOMETHING TO SOMEBODY.
YOU'RE FINE. LET'S GO. YOU TAKE THE ONE ON THE RIGHT.

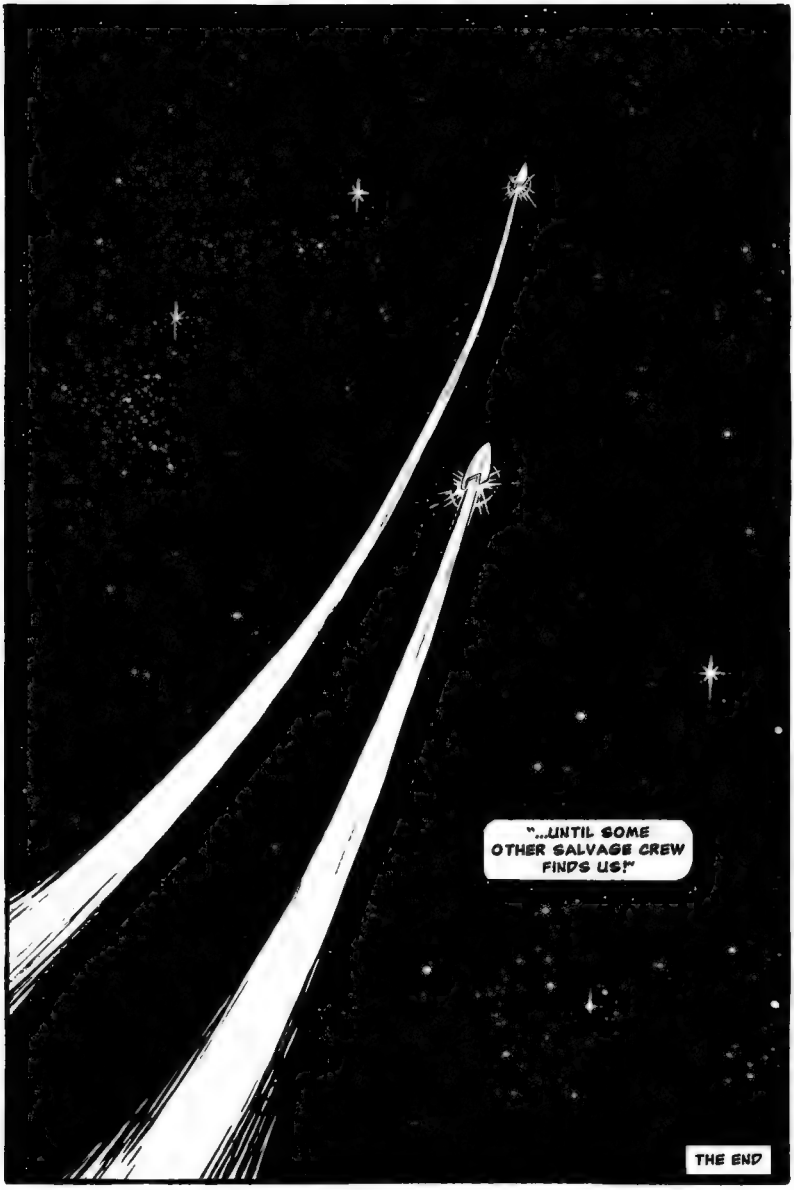
THE SHIP'S LAW ENFORCEMENT, THAT'S FOR SURE.
SO'S THE PILOT.
NOT THIS ONE. LOOKS LIKE HE STOLE A SHIP AND WAS FOLLOWED BY YOUR GUY.
THAT MUST HAVE BEEN A CHASE!
AMAZING!
THESE ARE ION DRIVES. THEY DON'T USE FUEL -- JUST ELECTRICITY.
THAT EXPLAINS HOW THEY WERE MOVING SO FAST. ION DRIVES HAVE ONLY A THEORETICAL SPEED LIMIT.
JUST RECHARGE THEIR BATTERIES FROM THE ZUTE AND WE WOULDN'T HAVE TO TOW THEM IN.
THESE ARE PRICELESS, NOBEN. TAKING TIME DILATION INTO ACCOUNT, THEY'VE PROBABLY BEEN AROUND FOR HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS, PROBABLY MILLIONS OF YEARS.

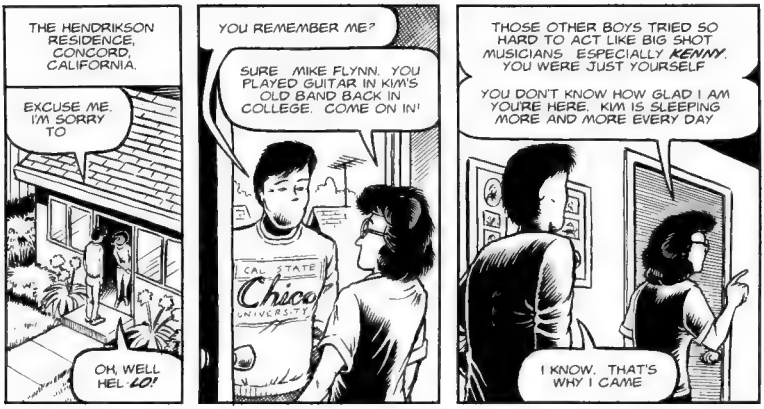
TRANSFER LINK ESTABLISHED. YOU READY OVER THERE?
READY. INITIATING POWER TRANSFER.
ALL RIGHT! HOW IS IT OVER THERE?
LOOKS GREAT. ALL SYSTEMS ACTIVE. READY TO DOWNLOAD ALL THE LOGS TO THE ZUTE'S COMPUTER?
ALREADY TRANSMITTING...
THIS IS GREAT! I COULD RETIRE AFTER WE GET THESE BABIES IN.
WHAT A LUCKY - - WHA?!

PIXO! WHAT HAPPENED?!
I DON'T KNOW? WHAT DID YOU DO?
NOTHING! I WAS JUST...
OH NO!
"THE ZUTE! WHAT'S SHE DOING?"

PIXO, THE SHIP'S GOING BERSERK.
WHAT'S HAPPENING?
I'M TRYING TO FIND OUT. I THINK...
...YES! IT WAS THE LOGS YOU DOWNLOADED. UNBELIEVABLE!
THE LOGS ARE MACRO CODE! DATA AND INSTRUCTIONS COMBINED. THE ZUTE CAN'T DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN WHAT TO DO AND WHAT TO STORE.
IT'S FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL PROGRAMMED INSTRUCTIONS FROM BOTH SHIPS. IT'S TRYING TO CHASE ITSELF!
YOU'VE GOT TO DISABLE IT!
I CAN'T. I'VE LOST CONTACT WITH THE ZUTE'S COMPUTER!
THE SHIP'S FLIPPING ALL OVER. MUCH MORE OF THIS AND IT'LL...
NO...

HEY!
PIXO, WE'RE MOVING!
YES. THE ORIGINAL PROGRAMS KICKED IN. ONCE WE RECHARGED THE BATTERIES, THE ONLY THING HOLDING US WAS THE ZUTE'S GRAVITATIONAL FIELD. WITH THAT GONE...
BUT THAT'S GREAT! WE CAN OVERRIDE THE CONTROLS AND FLY THESE THINGS BACK OURSELVES.
"THAT WOULD BE EASY, NOBEN, EXCEPT THAT THE CONTROLS ARE STILL PALM-ENCODED TO THE ORIGINAL PILOTS."
SO ALL WE CAN DO NOW IS SIT AND WAIT...


"...UNTIL SOME OTHER SALVAGE CREW FINDS US!"
THE END

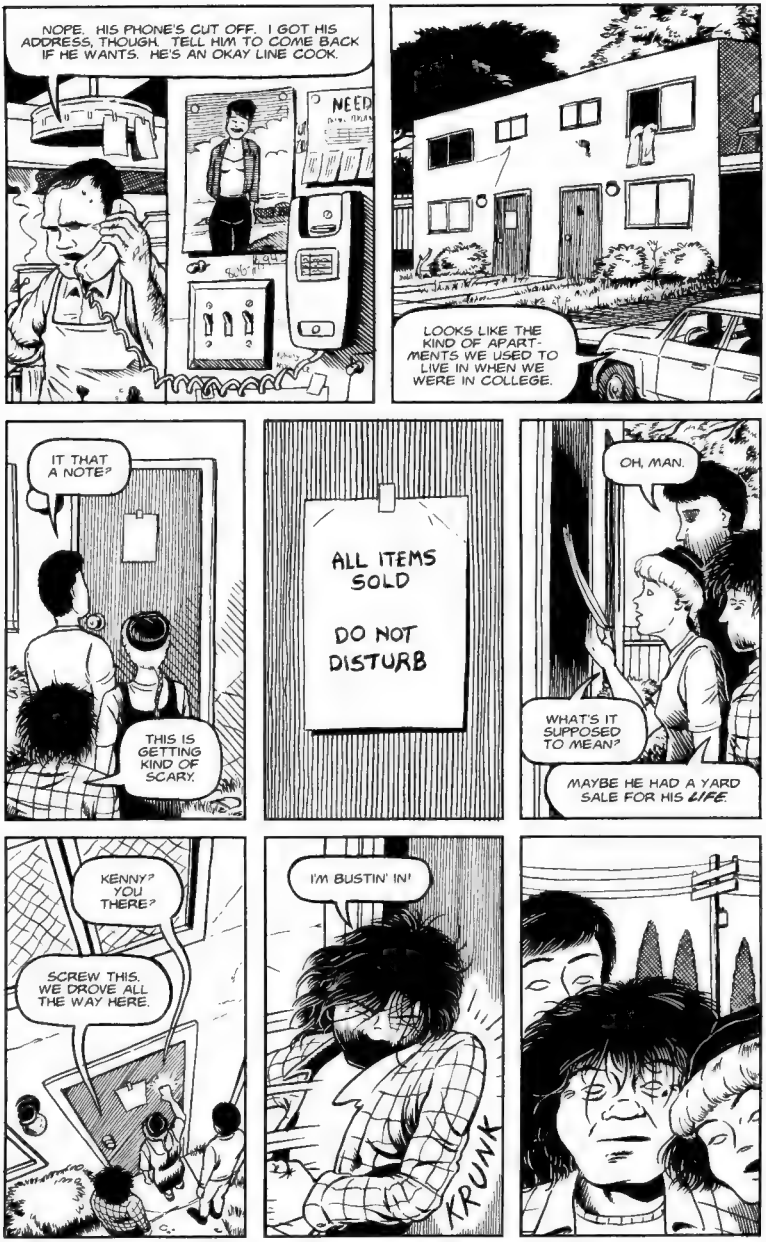

THE HENDRIKSON RESIDENCE, CONCORD, CALIFORNIA.
EXCUSE ME. I'M SORRY TO
OH, WELL HEL-LO!
YOU REMEMBER ME?
SURE. MIKE FLYNN. YOU PLAYED GUITAR IN KIM'S OLD BAND BACK IN COLLEGE. COME ON IN!
CAL STATE Chico UNIVERSITY
THOSE OTHER BOYS TRIED SO HARD TO ACT LIKE BIG SHOT MUSICIANS ESPECIALLY KENNY. YOU WERE JUST YOURSELF
YOU DON'T KNOW HOW GLAD I AM YOU'RE HERE. KIM IS SLEEPING MORE AND MORE EVERY DAY
I KNOW. THAT'S WHY I CAME

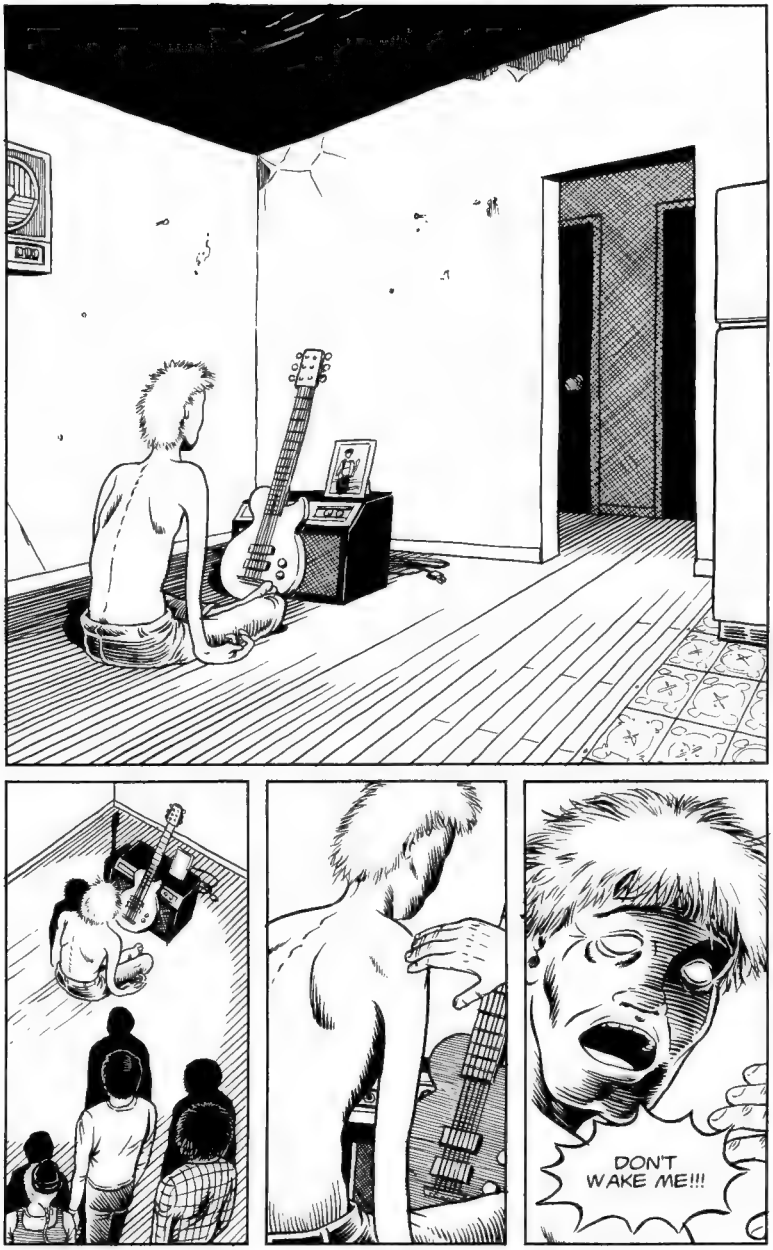
NO REGRETS {6} the place you call home

I SWEAR, I'M JUST ABOUT READY TO CALL AN AMBULANCE. SHE'S NOT SICK, SHE JUST WONT STAY AWAKE FOR MORE THAN AN HOUR OR SO
SHE'S GOING TO HAVE TO KIM, WAKE UP! IT'S MIKE!
CAL STATE
MIKE FOR REAL?
YES, MIKE FOR REAL. WE HAVE TO GET OUT OF KENNY'S DREAMS.
BUT IT'S BETTER THERE
IT'S DANGEROUS. I DON'T THINK KENNY IS REALLY IN CONTROL THERE
WE NEED TO TAKE CONTROL, BY PUTTING THE BAND BACK TOGETHER IN REAL LIFE.

IN THE DREAMS CARL IS A HAPPY HEROIN MAN. SO MUCH SO THAT HE ONCE REVEALED HE WAS USING AT BRUNEMIER'S IN THE WAKING WORLD.
BANG BANG
THEY'RE NOT EVEN GOING TO ANSWER THE DOOR
HE DIDN'T THINK ANYONE WOULD BE COMING FOR HIM, OR THAT HIS DRUG-INDUCED SLEEP STATE WOULD EVER END.
BRUNEMIER CONTINUED TO GIVE HIM ADEQUATE AMOUNTS OF FOOD, WATER AND HEROIN, VIEWING HIM AS AN AMUSING ODDITY.
PULLED FROM THE DREAM AND INTO THE LIGHT, HE SUDDENLY FEELS VERY, VERY ILL.
YA BASTARDS . . .
WHY ARE WE DOING THIS? NO REGRETS IS A DEAD BAND.
BREAKING UP WAS A MISTAKE.
IF WE STUCK WITH IT WHO KNOWS WHERE IT COULD HAVE TAKEN US, BUT LOOK AT US NOW. WE'RE MISERABLE.
WE WERE MISERABLE BACK THEN, GOING TO CHICO STATE.
YES, BUT ALL FOR DIFFERENT REASONS THAT WE KEPT TO OURSELVES. IF ONLY WE HAD TALKED ABOUT IT.
IT WAS TOO STRESSFUL. WE WERE GRADUATING AND HAD TO MOVE ON
BUT NOT GIVE UP. KENNY STAYED IN MUSIC AND BUILT A CAREER OUT OF IT.
YEAH, RIGHT. "THE MAN WITH NO REGRETS." BUT HE COULDN'T BRING JENNIFER INTO THE DREAM WORLD. SOMETHING'S NOT RIGHT.

MAYBE THE DREAMS WERE, LIKE, THIS WAKE UP CALL, YKNOW? TO SNAP US OUT OF THE WAY OUR LIVES HAVE GONE THE LAST TEN YEARS.
THAT'S WHAT I'VE BEEN TRYING TO TELL YOU, MORON!
HEY, OKAY OKAY! I'M STILL KINDA LIT, YKNOW.
SO HOW DO WE FIND KENNY SILVERS?
WHAT CITY KENNY CHOSE AFTER COLLEGE IS UNKNOWN. THE ORIGINS OF HIS BIRTHPLACE AND RELATIVES ALSO NEVER PUBLICIZED. EVENTUALLY HIS LAST KNOWN GIRLFRIEND IS LOCATED . . .
TELEPHONE
JENNIFER?
CAL STATE
Chico
WELL, KENNY DID CALL ME A COUPLE TIMES IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS. HE WANTED TO HEAR MY VOICE TO HELP HIM FOCUS ON A NEW "QUEST." HE WAS INTO SOME NEW RELIGION OR SOMETHING
HE EVEN WANTED A PHOTO OF ME. ISN'T THAT KIND OF WEIRD? I MEAN, WE BROKE UP BACK IN 1988. I HAVE HIS WORK PHONE NUMBER IF YOU WANT IT.
HE'S STILL LIVING IN CHICO
WHAT?!?
CHICO, CALIFORNIA.
"YEAH, KENNY USED TO WORK HERE. HE JUST STOPPED SHOWING UP ABOUT A MONTH AGO."
McHenry's
FAMILY DINING


NOPE. HIS PHONE'S CUT OFF. I GOT HIS ADDRESS, THOUGH. TELL HIM TO COME BACK IF HE WANTS. HE'S AN OKAY LINE COOK.
NEED
LOOKS LIKE THE KIND OF APARTMENTS WE USED TO LIVE IN WHEN WE WERE IN COLLEGE.
IT THAT A NOTE?
THIS IS GETTING KIND OF SCARY.
ALL ITEMS SOLD
DO NOT DISTURB
OH, MAN.
WHAT'S IT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?
MAYBE HE HAD A YARD SALE FOR HIS LIFE.
KENNY? YOU THERE?
SCREW THIS. WE DROVE ALL THE WAY HERE.
I'M BUSTIN' IN!
KRUNK


DON'T WAKE ME!!!

LEOPARD-MAN

LEOPARD-MAN AT C & A'S

We'll need a new jungle when the Zoo Age begins
We'll track down television sets and kill them for their skins
We'll squeeze the juice from cell-phones and we'll smear it on our faces
While Zebra cars at dusk drink from a gasoline oasis
With our necklaces of radio-teeth and bat-code face tattoos
We'll build a tribal fire of sound-bytes cut from Central Network News
We can sacrifice each logo; all those big fluorescent words
Up from the satellite flowers, keening, rise the karaoke birds
(And they go) Who are these shadows in my way?
Who are these shadows in my way?
Made up law is in my way, in my way,
Made up law is in my way, in my way, in my way.
We'll boil and shrink recording heads and hang them out on sticks;
We'll start a Jaguar cult and dress up like an XJ6;
Turn our CD's into wind-chimes turning slowly in the breeze;
We'll pursue the vegan cannibals through fibre-optic trees
Wearing Sony bones through noses where the sampled monkeys scream
We'll wade waist deep into the astro-turf of joystick jungle dreams
We'll forget that we had parents; we'll forget that we were white:
In the kitchen, the peaceful kitchen, the lino sleeps tonight
(And we go) Who are these shadows in my way?
Who are these shadows in my way?
Made up law is in my way, in my way,
Made up law is in my way, in my way, in my way.

Alan Moore's

ṣōⁿ ġᵇ ōōk

lyrics by
Alan Moore
illustration by
Jordan Raskin

DARIUS "THE GHOUL" TRILL. CONVICTED FOR THE BRUTAL SLAYING OF HIS WIFE AND 3 CHILDREN.
SCHEDULED FOR TRANSPORT/ RELOCATION TO THE FINAL DESTINATION.
MAXIMUM-SECURITY CONFINEMENT IN 3 GALACTIC STANDARD (S-G) DAYS.
YUM...NOW THAT LOOKS GOOD.
The MAN WHO NEVER WAS
...a SHIP OF FOOLS story.

IT'S NOT TRUE...THAT'S NOT WHAT HAPPENED!
I DIDN'T DO IT. I LOVED MY WIFE...MY CHILDREN.
OH, GIVE US A BREAK...ARE YOU GONNA DRAG US OVER AGAIN?
YOU MURDERED YOUR WIFE AND ATE THE KIDS, SO SHUT UP AND GO TO SLEEP!
I WASN'T TALKING TO YOU, SO KEEP YOUR SANCTIMONIOUS SARCASM TO YOURSELF. IT SHOULD BE OBVIOUS TO ANYONE WITH COMMON SENSE STILL FUNCTIONING THAT I WAS FRAMED. I WAS A C.I.P. ADMINISTRATOR...
SEE, I PEE?
COUNTER INTELLIGENCE PROGRAM.
GOOSE-STEPPIN' GESTAPO FLUNKY?
TOE-TAPPIN', HEEL-CLICKING, BOOT STRAP-LICKING TOADIE?
MURDERER... CHILD KILLER... CANNIBAL.
NO, NO... YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND.

BEFORE C.I.P....I WAS A HERO; A REAL HONEST-TO-GOD, WAR HERO. I SAVED LIVES...I MADE A DIFFERENCE ...I WAS DECORATED... PEOPLE LOVED ME...
BUT THAT WAS BEFORE...
IMPLANTS...FALSE IMAGES...I COULD NEVER...I LOVED MY FAMILY!
MEMORY-FRAUD IS STANDARD FRAME PROCEDURE FOR THE C.I.P. WE HAD ENEMIES ...POLITICAL! I AUTHORIZED PLANTS ON OTHERS! I... OH GOD...I HAD ENEMIES...
IT'S A MAD UNIVERSE OUT THERE, DARIUS. WHAT MAKES YOU THINK YOU'RE IMMUNE?
"UMHMM, YOU SURE DID."
DARIUS!

HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAFTA TELL YOU?...I WANT IT QUIET IN HERE!
KILL HIM, DARIUS!
AND TELL YOUR "LITTLE BUDDY" TO STAY OUT OF IT.
YOU SHUT UP.
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. PEOPLE WILL ASK QUESTIONS ...MY CASE WILL BE REOPENED ...I'M INNOCENT!
YEAH, RIGHT.
WHATSAMATTER, GHOUL? THIS LITTLE DAINTY'S BEEN ROTTING HERE FOR TWO WEEKS AND YOU AIN'T TOUCHED IT!
DAMN YOU.
DO IT NOW, DARIUS! KILL HIM!
KRAAAK!
I WAS A HERO. RESPECTED! YOU CAN'T MAKE A MAN DISAPPEAR!
DAMN YOU AND ALL YOUR KIND...BUREAUCRATIC LAP DOGS!

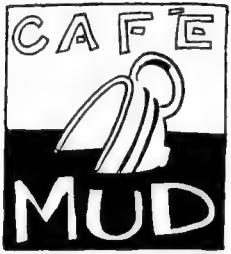
NO, DARIUS! DAMN YOU ...TO HELL.
DON'T YOU EVER TRY ME AGAIN! I'LL DO WORSE THAN KILL YOU.
THE PEOPLE... PEOPLE WILL ASK QUESTIONS...
IT'S YOU WHO DON'T GET IT. PEOPLE DON'T CARE. A FEW SHOCKING HEADLINES... A CUT AND DRIED TRIAL AND YOU'RE YESTERDAY'S NEWS. HISTORY, CHUMP. NOW... YOU'RE JUST THE MAN WHO NEVER WAS.
I'M INNOCENT ...SOMEDAY, I'LL GET OUT OF HERE...AND I'LL BRING THE WHOLE HOUSE OF CARDS DOWN ON THEIR HEADS...
MURDERER... CHILD KILLER... HELL BOUND.
OH, YOU SHUT UP!

april 13 1993

I was riding the bus.
The light was blue.
I was the only woman.
Music started to play.
The song was: "Fooled around and fell in love" by Elvin Bishop.
A man asked me if I recognized the song.
I told him it was: "Fooled around and fell in love" by Elvin Bishop.
A few more bars of the song later, I realized I was wrong and that I didn't recognize the song at all.
I was horrified.
The End
dreamt by c. ella walker

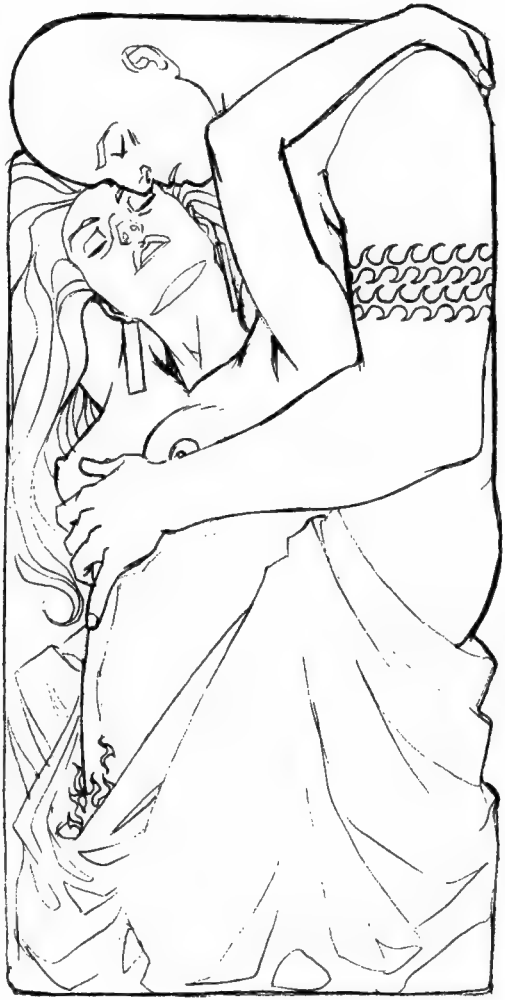
DAVE JOHNSON

SKETCHBOOK

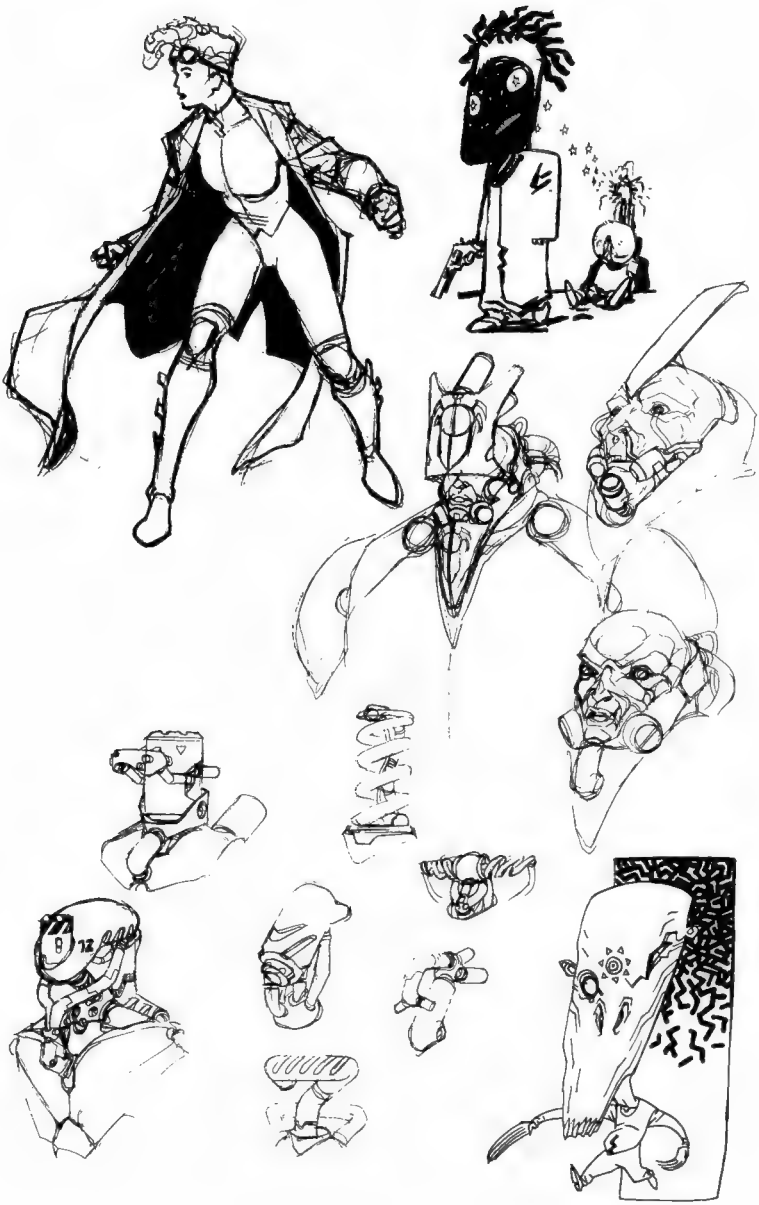

CAFÉ
MUD

LATTÉ
LIZARD

CAFÉ
SMOOTH



GOTTA NEEDLE, MEAN NOWDAY, ISN'T JUST FLY MUCH DA P



And now... another adventure of....
Captain KELLY
and her RENEGADE ROBOT DESTROYERS
In the distant future... Captain Kelly continues her courageous coup against the Servant Android Rebellion to overthrow the Terran Empire!
STORY & ART ©1994 - BLOODWORTH
DISCOMBOBULATE ANDROID SCUM!!
HOW MAY I..... SKKRRK YOU!
SKKRRK!!! WITH A TWIST

The infallibly logical android solution to halt the ever growing threat of world annihilation by the hand of man.
A diabolical plan to curb all destructive tendencies and inherent need for violence by assuming all mundane and dangerous tasks of civilization...
Once free from need or strife, all humans may pursue the mental, physical and cultural perfection of all races and creeds.
WHAT?!
THAT'S IT? THAT'S THE PLAN?
THEY'RE GOING TO TAKE CARE OF US?!
Umm... basically ...yes.
THAT WAS EASY. ANOTHER PROBLEM SOLVED!
AS ONLY YOU COULD, DIVINE MISS.
THAT'S ALL FOR NOW!

NEW YORK CITY, THE PRESENT DAY..
ARE YOU *SURE* HE IS DETECTING IN THIS TIMELINE, **FRIZE**?
OF *COURSE*. HE IS, **MACK**. NOW JUST KEEP HOOFING AND LEAVE THE TECH STUFF TO ME. WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME
I'M ONLY TRYING TO HELP. I *DID* CALIBRATE THE TACHYON FIELD, AFTER ALL.
I KNOW. SO IF WE END UP SLAP BANG IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE, WE'LL KNOW WHO TO **BLAME**....
..MACKINTYRUS-SALOME-META-MEGASAUR
THE THIRD, TO BE PRECISE. AND DON'T USE MY FULL NAME, FRIZE.
YOU *KNOW* IT GIVES ME A *HEADACHE*.
WHUMP!
WHAT THE-

IS THIS SOMEONE'S IDEA OF A JOKE? WHY I OUGHTTA I OUGHTTA ....
WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS! WE MUST FIND HIM SOON OR IT WILL BE TOO LATE!
....I OUGHTTA BE GOIN'! GOT FARES TO PICK UP.... UPTOWN.... REALLY GOTTA DASH....
GNASTY
BIG MACK AND
WORDZ - Noel K Hannan
Pictures - Rik Rawling
+Lettering - Derek Gray

SNIFF
HE'S HERE I CAN SMELL HIM. THIS WAY!
YOU SEE HOW MUCH EASIER THINGS ARE WHEN YOU'VE GOT YOUR OWN PERSONAL DEMON? BET YOU'RE GLAD YOU WON ME IN THAT CARD GAME, EH?
I'VE HAD PERSONAL DEMONS FOR YEARS, MACK AND I DIDN'T WIN. I LOST.
YOU WERE THE BOOBY PRIZE.
THAT'LL TEACH YOU TO PLAY TAROT POKER WITH EIGHTH-LEVEL NECROMANCERS. DON'T YOU KNOW MAGICIANS ALWAYS CHEAT?
YEAH, YEAH, BUDDY... AND I'M ROBOCOP
WASN'T THE DEAL SOMETHING LIKE 'FOLLOW MY MISTRESS'S ORDERS WITHOUT QUESTION'?
SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
THEN SHUT YOUR WISEASS MEGASAUR MOUTH AND KEEP TRACKIN'.
NYPD

NOW THAT'S NOT— —HEY!— I SEE HIM!
HURRY, MACK! I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH LONGER WE'VE GOT!
CRACK!
OUCH! THAT HURT (a little)!
CAN'T YOU JUST FIRE YOUR GUN NEXT TIME?
THERE HE GOES!
DON'T LOSE HIM, MACK!

Boner China
YOU BREAK IT YOU BOUGHT IT
SHALL I ?
WE DON'T HAVE TIME CAN YOU STILL SMELL HIM?
EXCUSE ME YOU WOULDN'T HAPPEN TO HAVE SEEN A LITTLE-
I GOT HIM!
HOLD ON. HE'S LEFT THE BUILDING
I'LL FIRE THE GUN THIS TIME, SHALL I ?
PLEASE

SLACK OFF
THERE. I TOLD YOU I'D FIND HIM.
YOU DID GOOD STAY HERE
I'LL HANDLE THIS.
The Aliens are coming
DON'T MOVE. DON'T EVEN TWITCH. YOU GOT THAT?
ARF
Hey Hey

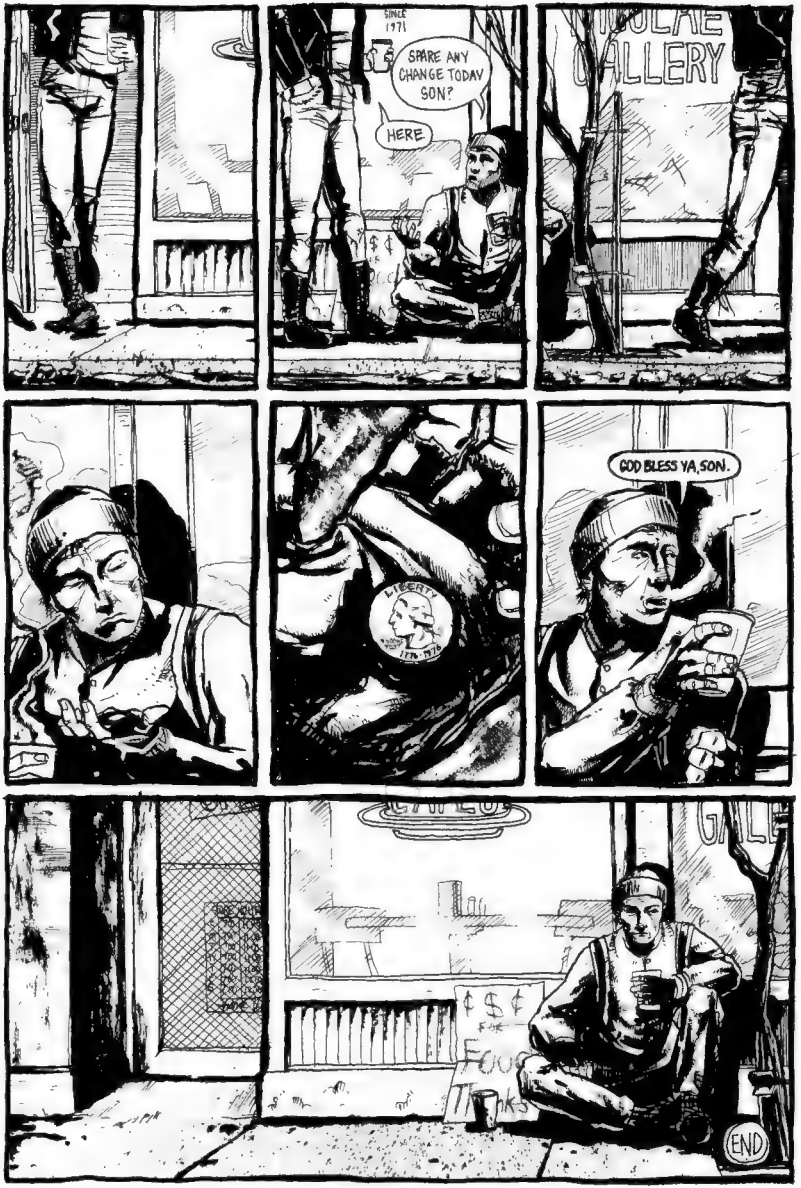
YOU LITTLE BASTARD. DO YOU KNOW HOW MUCH TROUBLE YOU'VE CAUSED ?
I'LL BE BACK.
LADIES
HUMANS! PAH! CAN'T LIVE WITH 'EM, CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT 'EM!
Kibo!
God N Guns
eat my shit

1995
"CHANGE"
STORY AND ART BY
ANDY BENNETT
SPARE SOME CHANGE 'SEVENING, MAAM?
SIR?
GOD BLESS YA, SIR.
PLOP!
SINCE 1971
OPEN

HIYA, TRISH!
sorry we're CLOSED
COME AGAIN
HEY, PHIL! HOW ARE YOU DOING THIS EVENING?
DOIN' GOOD, THANKS.
CUPPA JOE TA GO, IF YOU PLEASE.
COMIN' RIGHT UP, SIR...
Versa-Cup
THERE YA GO, PHIL.
THANK YOU, SWEETHEART.
S'LONG, PHIL; YOU KEEP WARM OUT THERE!
MM-KAY.
'SCUSE ME.
WE'RE CLOSED

HI, WHAT CAN I GETCHA?
UM, COFFEE TO GO, PLEASE.
OHO, MY SPECIALTY!
HA. EXCELLENT.
THE PERFECT CUP OF COFFEE, ONLY SEVENTY-FIVE CENTS.
WAIT A SEC...
'SMATTER?
WELL, I JUST HAD A BUNCHA CHANGE, BUT I DONT KNOW WHAT I DID WITH IT. I HATE TO DO THIS TO YOU, BUT CAN YOU BREAK A TEN?
CAN DO!
YOU SURE?
YAH, NO PROBLEM!
NINE TWENTY-FIVE'S YOUR CHANGE.
THANKS.

AW, MAN, LOOK! I KNEW I HAD CHANGE SOMEWHERE. I ALWAYS FORGET TO CHECK THESE POCKETS!
LOOK, HERE'S... ¢,¢,¢,... EIGHTY CENTS; I'D REALLY RATHER JUST PAY WITH THIS...
CAN I JUST GIVE YOU THIS, AND GET MY TEN BACK?
SURE, WHY NOT.
THANKS A LOT. YOU CAN KEEP THE NICKEL. THANKS.
NO PROBLEM.
!!
THERE YA GO!
THANKS AGAIN.
SEE YOU LATER.
HAVE A NICE NIGHT!


SINCE 1971
SPARE ANY CHANGE TODAY SON?
HERE
GOD BLESS YA, SON.
LIBERTY
END

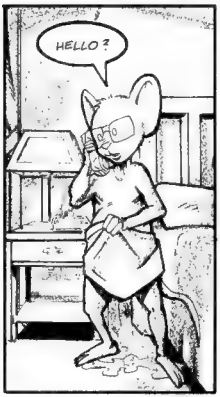
YOU NEVER KNOW

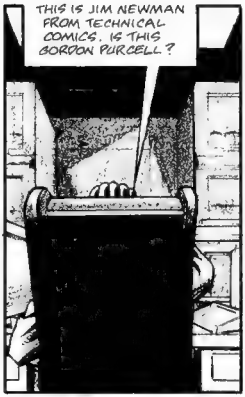
BUY A RIBBON FOR WORLD AIDS DAY!
I'LL HAVE ONE!
RIBBONS
IT'S STRANGE... WE'RE FACED WITH ONE OF THE ...UH... DEADLIEST VIRUSES KNOWN TO MAN AND THE BEST WE CAN COME UP WITH IS A BUNCH OF RIBBONS!
DON'T BE DAFT! IT'S A SYMBOL OF SOLIDARITY AND HOPE!! IT'S ABOUT SUPPORTING THOSE WHO'VE GOT IT!!
YEAH I KNOW! DOES IT LOOK STRAIGHT?
YEAH!
I MEAN I'LL WEAR THE DAMN THING BUT... WELL... NONE OF MY FRIENDS HAVE IT! I DON'T HAVE IT! I'VE NEVER EVEN MET ANYONE WHO HAS!!
WORLD AIDS DAY
YOU JUST HAVE!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
I'VE GOT IT!
YOU?! GOD!! I'M SORRY!
DON'T BE!
ANYWAY- SEE YA AROUND!
YEAH- RIGHT, BYE!
DAMN! WHO'D CREDIT IT? SHE WAS SO CUTE! AH WELL!

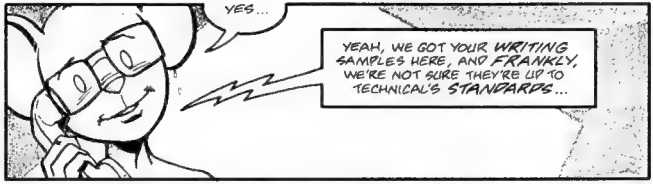
written and
illustrated by
IAN SHEPHERD

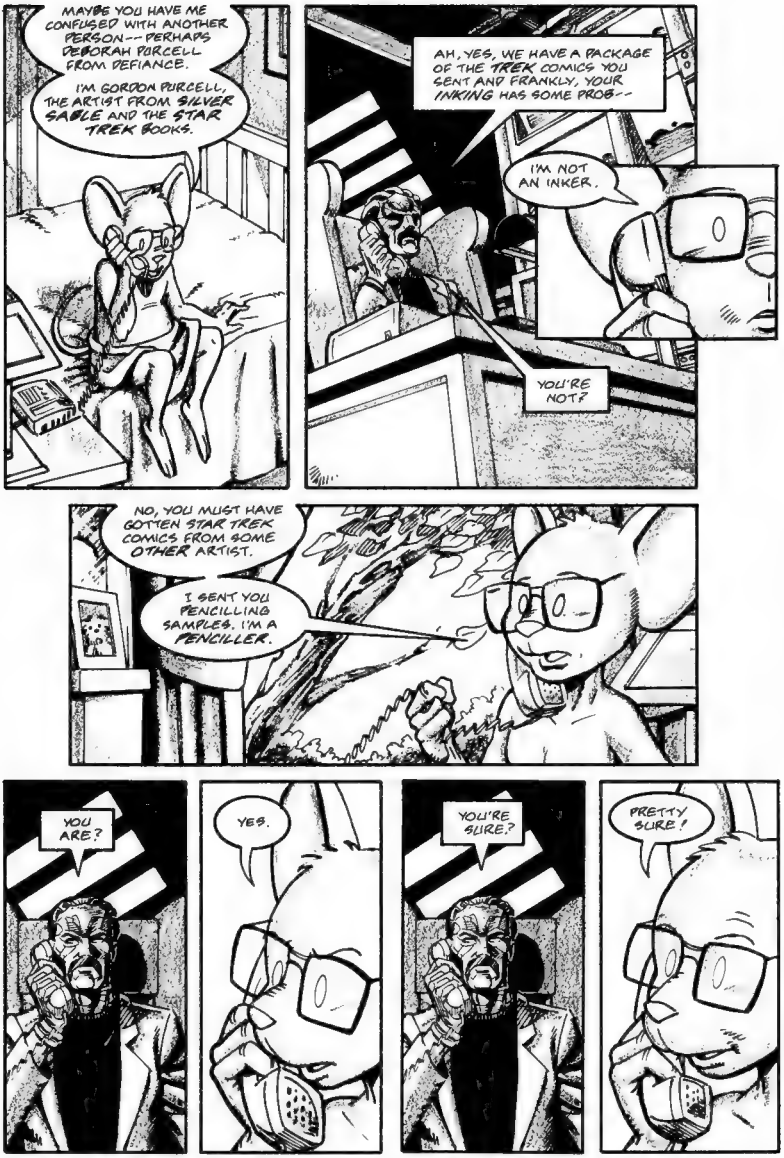
TRANSMISSION FROM TECHNICAL

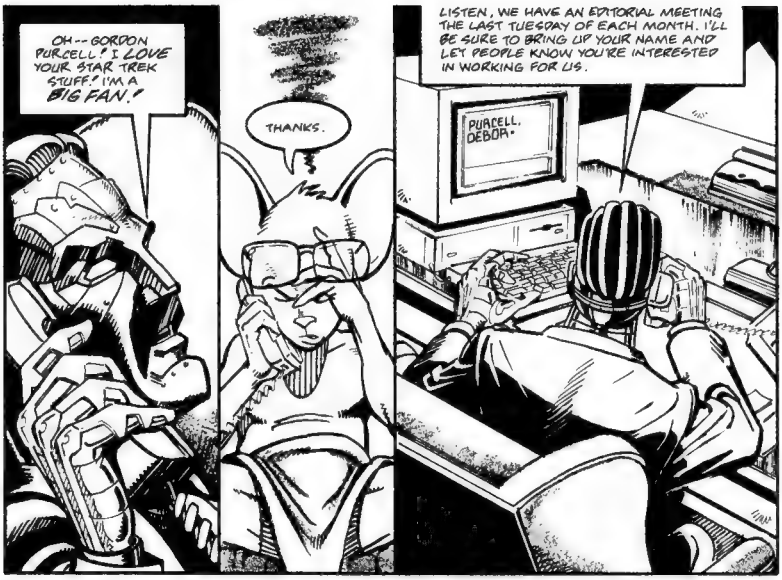
(A Mostly True Story)
by GORDON PURCELL
lettered by PAUL FRICKE
© 1996

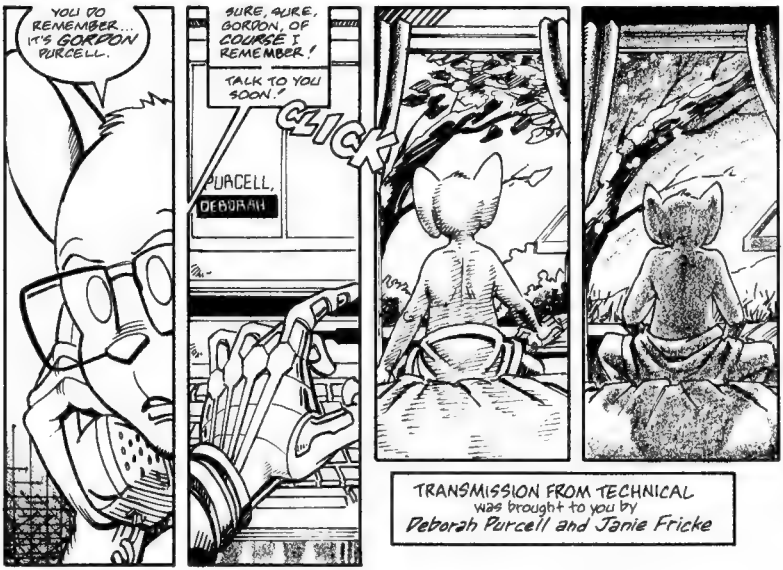







MAYBE YOU HAVE ME CONFUSED WITH ANOTHER PERSON-- PERHAPS DEBORAH PURCELL FROM DEFIANCE.
I'M GORDON PURCELL, THE ARTIST FROM SILVER SABLE AND THE STAR TREK BOOKS.
AH, YES, WE HAVE A PACKAGE OF THE TREK COMICS YOU SENT AND FRANKLY, YOUR INKING HAS SOME PROB--
I'M NOT AN INKER.
YOU'RE NOT?
NO, YOU MUST HAVE GOTTEN STAR TREK COMICS FROM SOME OTHER ARTIST.
I SENT YOU PENCILLING SAMPLES. I'M A PENCILLER.
YOU ARE?
YES.
YOU'RE SURE?
PRETTY SURE!


OH -- GORDON PURCELL! I LOVE YOUR STAR TREK STUFF! I'M A BIG FAN!
THANKS.
LISTEN, WE HAVE AN EDITORIAL MEETING THE LAST TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH. I'LL BE SURE TO BRING UP YOUR NAME AND LET PEOPLE KNOW YOU'RE INTERESTED IN WORKING FOR US.
PURCELL, DEBOR-



TRANSMISSION FROM TECHNICAL
was brought to you by
Deborah Purcell and Janie Fricke

HORMAN
HE HIT PUBERTY AT AGE SIX!
BY LEE KITZIS AND M. CAMPOS
SIGH...
AS A KID I WAS DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHERS....
HA HA HA! LOOK AT FACIAL HAIR BOY!
ALF.
I WAS THE ONLY KID TO GET FULL PUBIES IN FOURTH GRADE!
THE GIRLS WOULD ALWAYS LOOK AT ME AND LAUGH..
HO HA HA HO HEE HEE
IT WAS HORRIBLE!
BY SEVENTH GRADE, I STARTED GETTING NICKNAMES.
HEY HAIRBALL!
FUZZ-FACE!
BEARD-O!
YA HIPPIE!
THAT MADE ME SO MAD!!
AARGH!
BUT— WHEN I REACHED HIGH SCHOOL, GIRLS LOVED MY FACIAL HAIR!
ALL THESE CHANGES CONFUSED ME. SIGH.
YOUTH SUCKS!

letters

Olav Beemer
Zeist, The Netherlands

Dear Joe,

Another fine issue NEGATIVE BURN #31 was. With new issues safely arriving on the racks in my local comic book store at a breakneck speed and with the sixty-four pages to contend with, I don't think there's any reason to fear boredom anytime soon!

"Jinx" was the issue's surprise feature. Although I have read some of Brian Michael Bendis' work, I never truly took notice of just how good a storyteller he is until I read this very installment. The art is rough yet it fits right in with the tale's mood and atmosphere, while the story in itself was interesting with a few nice twists near the end. Based upon this, you bet I'll check out the regular JINX series when it comes out.

"An Empty Love Story" turned out to be quite the entertaining tale, even though at several instances I felt writer Steve Darnall was laying it on a bit thick. Still, the smooth way of storytelling convinced me here, and combined with the realistic artwork and the ironic happy ending, I'd say this could be regarded as a very good feature.

"I Was The Thing With Two Heads!"—what can I say? By far the most hilarious and enjoyable ingredient of this very issue, as the sheer absurdity of the chronicled occurrences made for such wonderful reading. Mike Perkins delivered a solid job on the art, while Mike Maddox did a truly great story with a killer ending to boot. Good job, Mike and Mike!

"Cave Painting" felt a bit out of place, at first. Being so different in its theme and mood, I thought that perhaps it would have been better not to include this feature in the issue at hand. Still, reading it convinced me otherwise, as the strong and focused story grabbed my undivided interest as soon as I passed the first page. This was a real eye-opener, so it's assuring to know that even after thirty-one issues, NEGATIVE BURN can still surprise me in a fashion so pleasant.

As I said, thumbs up on another fine issue. To sneak in a tiny piece of criticism, though, I'd appreciate it if the covers have something to do with one of the featured stories in the issue, in that they are recognizable as such. Covers, after all, should be an extension of a book's contents, not merely a piece of pin-up artwork.

Good to hear from you, Olav. So, how do the rest of you readers feel about the covers? Do you want me to always have a cover that features something from the issue inside or do you prefer the way I do it now—about 50% original covers that have nothing to with the insides and 50% that do? I'd be interesting in knowing your thoughts.

Gelb D. Boon
via America On Line

Dear Joe,

NB #31 was a fine issue with only a few crusty items to diminish the shine of the gems.

"The Abyss Also Grasps"—Good story, good artwork. It was an interesting coupling. Such an off the wall illustrator doing a rather mundane slice-of-life tale. Anecdote—My cousin and his wife were visiting this weekend. He pointed out the wolf looking through the lady's clothes on page 5 to his wife and asked her if she liked it. She, being a feminist sort, took one glance and said "no." I thought it was funny because it was so out of context, such an opposite reaction as to what the story was doing. Of course neither person read it.

"Jinx"—I'm wondering how much B. M. Bendis photo references his work. It's good for that "noir" thing. Entertaining.

"The Factor"—I don't know what it was about this one that I liked so much. Possibly the artwork. The story was the best of this series so far too.

"Dream Lovers"—Good experimenting with the artwork. I guess I'm just not a fan of Fricke. So much of his stuff comes across as holier than thou ("Smoke") or preachy. "Paul Pry and the Plastic Cup" being a notable exception. I could be reading too much into it, it's hard for me to tell what he's trying to do. I guess I'll have a long time to figure it out since he's going to be such a regular.

"No Regrets"—I was really surprised that this was a serial. I thought the first installment left off beautifully. I was even more surprised when Jeff managed to maintain the quality of work he began the story with. It's going to be a hard tightrope walk across this one. He has to live up to what he's already done. (I'm afraid he might provide too much closure for me at the end. We shall see we shall see.)

"Methadone Club"—I really want to like this one. I feel like I must be missing something. I like the artwork. But I just don't get it.

"An Empty Love Story"—This was pretty funny and enjoyable. I liked it.

Internet: 72164.1134@CompuServe P.O. Box 893 Acworth,GA 30101

"No Man is an Island"— ??

"I Was the Thing with Two Heads"—Did Mike Maddox recently have a vasectomy? Neat little ditty.

"Cave Painting"—Very promising work. I want to see more from this Whitley guy!

"Doors"—Very nice as well.

Well, it seems like you liked most everything, Gelb. That's a pretty good ratio, given that the issue's 64 pages long!

I agree with you on Jason Whitley's work. He's a promising newcomer who I hope to see more of in these pages.

Edward Douglas
76453.767@compuserve.com

Hey, Joe!

Last issue was so good that I was expecting this one (#30)to settle down a bit. Is it just me or did it seem like there were more shorter stories than usual?

The Jay Geldhof cover was okay, nothing that spectacular.

"The Ritual" must have taken Stefan Petrucha a long time to script! <G> I don't know why I don't like stories with more pictures than words; you'd think that I'd enjoy them as they read faster than having to muster through all those sentences and syntax and such, but no, they're even harder to read as you have to study each picture individually to try to follow what is going on. I noticed that there seemed to be a lot of wordless stories this issue! Unfortunately, when you do a story like this, you have to make sure the artist can deliver and in this case, I'm afraid that I found Grant Fuhst's artwork a bit too sloppy for my tastes, and I had trouble figuring out what was going on. I really don't have any idea what the point of this story was.

"Robert Redford" was another hilarious "Mr. Mamoulian" short (that's two!) and I'm beginning to think that a Mr. Mamoulian/TUG AND BUSTER crossover would be absolutely hilarious! For some reason, this situation seemed hauntingly familiar; I'm sure I've had this same conversation with women friends of mine, and I don't understand the logic either. If they say they find you to be attractive, why are they just friends, right? I'll never figure out women.

Next up, is another chapter in Nat Gertler's "The Factor" and the artwork is already a marked improvement on that of the first installment, which was last issue's pleasant surprise! Janine Johnston combines her wonderful painted work which I love with some splendid line art to enhance Nat's interesting "non-look" at superheroes. "Arms and the Man" was pretty good if not as intensive as the last chapter, and the writing was a bit bland comparatively. Maybe it was just the subject matter, but this one seemed to be even more esoteric with the superhero playing only a bit part as the ideal man in a woman's fantasy. The scary thing is that I know someone just like her date, "Paul"...hmmm. (And no, it's not me. <G>)

I love P. Craig Russell's adaptations of operas, so even the one-page "La Promessa" was a joy! I guess this didn't warrant "Opus" status though, huh? I'd love to see more of these adaptations of arias.

I've heard a lot of good things about "Rob Haines", so once again, NB acts like the perfect liaison to introduce me to a series that I might not have checked out otherwise. This was kinda fun even though it was short, and I'll probably check out ADVENTURE STRIP DIGEST based on it.

Mike Oeming offers up a very different style from his usual in "Acid Lad", but this didn't seem to have any real point except to be a weird interlude. I'll wait for the SHIP OF FOOLS preview, thanks.

CAVEWOMAN's Budd Root offers a preview of his artwork (for those who haven't seen it) in *another* wordless, "The Basement." While I didn't really see the point of this one either, this one was kinda fun .... in a "Gee, how are they going to get away with this one?" sort of way. I think that Bud is a fantastic artist, though, and this shows that he has quite a range. I wonder how long it will be before the majors try to get him away from CAVEWOMAN to do their next big project.

Yay! Another Zander Cannon short! "The Bungy Cord" proves once again that Zander is the next Evan Dorkin! He is able to instill a subtle hilarity into everything he does in the most underrated way that I found myself chuckling at what could be considered a one-page throwaway.

Having read Sean and Rob's offering "Targets" in Ohio and not really getting it, I was surprised to see that I enjoyed it more on second reading a few months later. Maybe realizing that the main characters were Sean and Rob themselves made a lot of it make more sense. As a matter of fact, I like it a lot more now that I get what Sean was trying to put across and all the names actually brought a smile to my face. I'm not sure if this has too many "inside" references to be understood by the common reader, but it's a great message, and I think that the CBLDF should adopt this story for their brochures. This is very well done, and I have to say that Sean's going to be a pretty decent writer some day.

Jeff Nicholson is a familiar name, but I can't place from where. "No Regrets" is a wonderful story that takes me by surprise. I'm not sure what this reminds me of...LOWLIFE possibly? I don't know, but I enjoy this sort of flashback/memories kind of comic. It was a rather enigmatic story, especially the ending. (Wait a second ... is this supposed to be the first chapter of a serialized story?) Anyway, I like the connections to modern alternative rock, and I can't wait to see where this goes.

The "Two Pauls" are back with a decidedly different Christmas poem, "Old Saint Nick", that had me rolling on the floor! These are two sick bastards, I tell ya, and as much as I hate illustrated prose stories, this one was fast enough to be enjoyable. I love those guys!

(I just noticed that there was no "Alan Moore Songbook" this issue....it's funny how you can miss something that you don't like when you notice it missing.)

"Whatever Happened to Doc Donovan" is by two creators I've never heard of, Noel Hannan and Virgil Elvin, and this is story in the vein of Steve Seagle's

SOLSTICE which I really enjoyed despite the predictable EC ending. The art was okay, but Noel's definitely a writer to watch as he seems to have some interesting stories to tell.

"Tales of the Hoon" - Tales of the Huh? Whuzzat? I sort of remember seeing or reading something about this character, but this is a pretty lame introduction. The first page was hilarious and then it went downhill from there. Nice art, though.

Ah. Another feature from Eeenieweenie Comics (thanks for the ad) as Derek Drymon presents "Boys will be Boys." This on the other hand, was absolutely hilarious and had much of the same sort of humor found in INSTANT PIANO and the like. Now that I think about it, "The Hoon" story wasn't that bad, but it probably could have been a bit longer. These are two more examples of how NB is being used to showcase other creators and comics and help make readers aware of what's out there.

And the final offering for the issue is "A Thousand Pictures plus One Word" by Doug Wheeler, while it made some vicious comments about certain comics companies and their practices, wasn't especially funny.

Well, Joe, this wasn't the best issue of NB, but it sure wasn't the worst. I guess we can only get a #29 once every few months. My favorite story was the "Doc Donovan" one with "No Regrets" and "Targets" following closely behind. "La Promessa" and "Mr. Mamoulian" were a bit too short to count although I enjoyed both of them. Everything else I could take or leave, but I'm glad to have been introduced to Budd Root, Rob Haines and Eenieweenie Comics. I'll check some of their other work out.

By all means, check out the other work of the creators spotlighted in this issue, Ed. That's what the ads and spotlights are for! See how easy I make things for you.

Jeff Nicholson has done a variety of work. You've probably seen him in TABOO, LOST LAUGHTER, ULTRA KLUTZ, or his new series FATHER AND SON (from Kitchen Sink). He'll also be doing an issue of Vertigo's THE DREAMING coming up shortly. "No Regrets" is indeed a serial that runs through issue #36 (June). Hope you continue to enjoy it. I know I will.

Mike Leonard
mleon99@aol.com

Joe,

Hello! Since I've got a few extra minutes, thought I'd give you some observations / thoughts / opinions on NB #31.

The cover: Very, very cool. Wouldn't mind seeing more of this sort of thing, it really draws attention to the book.

"The Abyss Also Grasps": Without a doubt, the best feature this issue! I love Kevin's work, ever since I stumbled across Epic's MARSHAL LAW a few years back (which reminds me, I should seek out the issue I don't have of that book ...). Kev's work is even better in B&W than color. Is this a series of some sort, or was it just a one-shot story? Very cool, very surreal, more, please!

"Mr. Mamoulian": Well, it was funny, but perhaps a little over-extended. IMHO, the punch line should have came earlier, but it was still funny.

"Jinx": Good as a stand alone story, but as an incentive to check out the ongoing series, it could have been stronger. Brian's still at top form, though.

"Jamie Hernandez Sketchbook": Cool. I've really been enjoying the sketchbook features, much more than I thought I would.

"The Factor": I dunno ... it was a pretty interesting concept, but just not as powerful as the earlier installments.

"Dream Lovers": I liked it—had a very ... I dunno ... stream of consciousness feel to it.

"No Regrets": Very good, if not for 'Abyss', this would have been my favorite of the issue. Very creepy, can't wait to see more!

"The Methadone Club": Well, I dunno ... neat, I guess. I can't really say I loved it, but I didn't dislike it, either, so I guess that's something.

"Empty Love Stories: He Wouldn't Eat Meat": Very off the wall, nice twist on the 'forbidden lovers' idea. Great artwork.

"No Man Is An Island": This would make a cool t-shirt.

"I Was The Thing With Two Heads": Not my cup of tea, I'm afraid. Very, very nice art, though.

"Cave Painting": Okay, I'm a bit biased here, I've been talking to Jason about doing something together, but I did like it. Jason expressed that he wasn't too happy with the writing himself, but I thought it was a good piece, all the way around.

"Doors": Neat! (Hey, I have a thing for doors, obviously...)

As far as I know, "The Abyss Also Grasps" is a once-in-a-lifetime thing, but I would be interested if they wanted to do more.

Ben Meredith
Lampeter, Dyfed
United Kingdom

Dear Joe et al,

Something about NEGATIVE BURN seems to inspire your readers to review rather than simply write lovely adoring fan mail. Fine by me, let's see, #31...

"The Abyss"—what is horror? Vampires, assorted monsters, Tom Hanks trying to be cute? Nooo. The bubbling mires of filth that many ordinary-seeming people carry around inside their minds, there are whole worlds of horror therein. Luckily, most people keep it on the inside. I know I do, Nyaa ha haa!! Seriously though, I hope you got a decent housemate in the end, Miz. Beltane (assuming this was autobiographical, the characters seemed somehow too awful to be merely fictional) and I liked the story, particularly the end—people don't like to hear the truth about themselves and truth, after all, can be highly subjective. Nice to see some Kevin O'Neill art. Don't suppose MARSHAL LAW is going to turn up in your pages? (Man, I love that kind of superhero comic...)

"Mr. Mamoulian"—this is enjoyable for two reasons. Firstly, it features the opinions and experiences of an intelligent, analytical, non-judgmental mind that is unfortunately obsessed with sex. The results

are awkward, melancholy and painfully self-conscious—all of which are ingredients for great comedy. Secondly, Brian Bolland is (in my opinion) one of the best artists around, which unfortunately means his chief work is cover art, creating attractive window dressing to entice the public. It's good to see him get the chance to express himself in your pages and the results, while less visually stunning, are certainly worth it.

"Jinx" was good (I'll buy it if I've got the money, OK? Don't push me man...) And I know it's based on a true story, I was that guy who got arrested, and I'm still pissed off about it, alright??

"The Factor"—an interesting approach to the normally boring media-vigilante bit, the various repercussions caused by a half-glimpsed incident in a bank.

"No Regrets"—man, I wish Jeff Nicholson would give these people irises and pupils. I wouldn't want the demonic garage-band from Hell wandering about in my dreams.

"The Methadone Club"—eurgh, if that's what being on methadone is like, I'm sticking to smack, me.

"He Wouldn't Eat Meat"—I dunno, it was alright but I prefer my satire to be more cruel, harder hitting... And the marinated tripe-bearing Herbie... I wanted the Fonz to turn up and give him a good kicking. Personally, I don't eat meat because I don't like it. I don't see vegetarianism as some kind of religious crusade to extend to every carnivore I know. (Though cruelty to animals is A BAD THING.)

"I Was the Thing With Two Heads"—brilliant, surreal, absurd, you name it. I've got the name Mike Maddox tattooed on my frontal (and ear) lobes. What else has the man done?

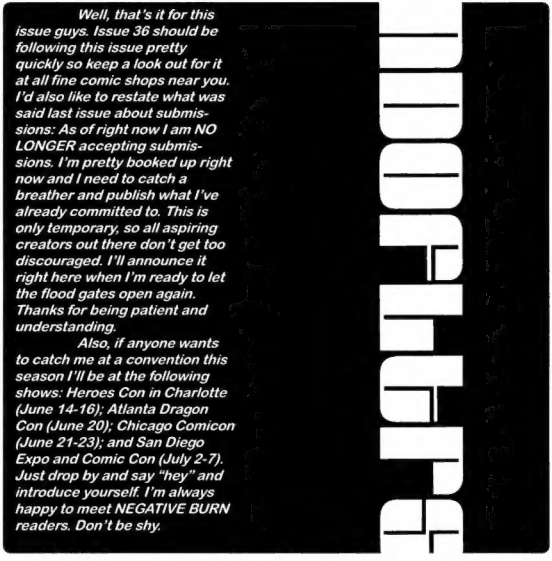
"Cave Painting"—Well, it could have had a more upbeat ending, couldn't it? Like...with smurfs in it or something. Even so, it was dead... poignant. (Love that word)

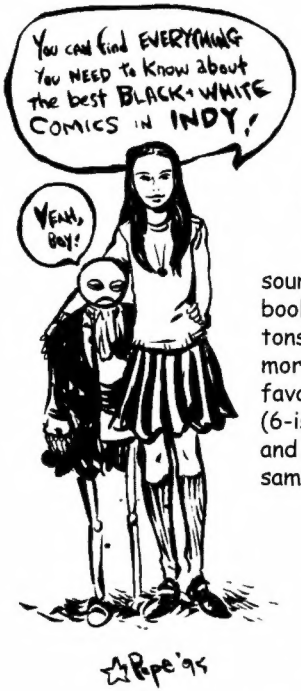
So, in summation... All I can say is this—a year ago, as far as I was concerned there was only one comic anthology around that was worth reading. It was printed in black and white, and in the past had contained work by some of my favorite writers and artists. Now... there is still only one comic anthology around that I consider worth reading, it's also black and white, contains work by old favorites as well as several talented people I previously didn't know about. It just isn't the same title any more. Good luck in the future with Caliber. You seem to have principals and a commitment to quality over what is popular. Please try to maintain this, it's a less attractive prospect than the making of money, but far more important.

Welcome aboard, Ben. Hope you continue to enjoy all the odd, strange little things we'll be throwing your way in the months to come. You may even find some of them... poignant.

Well, that's it for this issue guys. Issue 36 should be following this issue pretty quickly so keep a look out for it at all fine comic shops near you. I'd also like to restate what was said last issue about submissions: As of right now I am NO LONGER accepting submissions. I'm pretty booked up right now and I need to catch a breather and publish what I've already committed to. This is only temporary, so all aspiring creators out there don't get too discouraged. I'll announce it right here when I'm ready to let the flood gates open again. Thanks for being patient and understanding.

Also, if anyone wants to catch me at a convention this season I'll be at the following shows: Heroes Con in Charlotte (June 14-16); Atlanta Dragon Con (June 20); Chicago Comicon (June 21-23); and San Diego Expo and Comic Con (July 2-7). Just drop by and say "hey" and introduce yourself. I'm always happy to meet NEGATIVE BURN readers. Don't be shy.





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